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SUBJECT: DRC ELECTIONS SITREP 10/28, 1200

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¶1. (U) Summary: The Democratic Republic of Congo remains calm on the eve of the October 29 presidential and provincial elections. Official campaigning ended at midnight October 27 and there have been no reports since of serious incidents in Kinshasa or elsewhere. Voting will begin at 0600 local time October 29 and end at 1700, at which time poll workers will immediately begin hand-counting ballots. The Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) plans to announce provisional results of the presidential race no later than November 19. Provisional results for the provincial assemblies are not expected until December 5. End summary.

¶2. (U) The October 29 DRC presidential contest is a run-off between President Joseph Kabila and Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba, who won 44.8 percent and 20 percent, respectively, in the July 30 first round. Voters will also choose from among 14,637 candidates to fill 632 seats in the DRC's 11 new provincial assemblies.

¶3. (U) Nearly 18 million voters participated in the July 30 elections out of the 25.4 million registered voters. Many observers expect turnout to be slightly higher for the second round, although weather conditions could have an impact. Some two-thirds of the country is now in the rainy season, unlike during the July vote. Heavy rains in many parts of the country could lower turnout and make roads impassable, creating significant delays in the collection and counting of ballots.

¶4. (U) Kabila and Bemba each gave interviews to the national and international press during the last days of the campaign that laid out their post-election priorities. Kabila said that after the elections he would focus on five main areas: employment, infrastructure, water and electricity, education, and health. He promised that after October 29 he would meet with Bemba to urge the population to remain peaceful as results are announced. Kabila said a "government of national unity" would be ineffective, but stated he would extend his hand to the opposition, including Bemba's Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) party to help bring the country together.

¶5. (U) Bemba spoke October 26 with Radio France International to outline his vision of an MLC-led government. He said his first priorities would be to re-establish security throughout the country and to guarantee equitable distribution of the country's resources and wealth. Bemba promised that, if elected, he would ensure Kabila's personal security and invite his party to participate in governing. Bemba said if he were to lose he would accept the results and join the opposition so long as the elections were judged fair and transparent.

¶16. (U) The International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) released a statement October 27 congratulating the Congolese people for having chosen a peaceful path despite the difficulties of the transitional period. The CIAT ambassadors said the following days were the most important for the nation and emphasized that no one will accept a return to violence and destruction. The declaration called on all candidates, particularly Kabila and Bemba, to place the destiny of their country before personal or partisan interests.

¶17. (U) The leaders of the DRC's largest religious groups also called on Congolese to remain peaceful in the coming weeks. Cheik Abdallah Mangala of the Congolese Islamic community urged voters to turn out in large numbers to choose their future leaders wisely. Mangala said the DRC's religious communities will be deploying some 50,000 observers to monitor the elections.

UPDATE ON PROVINCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

¶18. (U) Bandundu province has not witnessed any major violence during the campaign period. The region voted heavily for its native son, Antoine Gizenga of the Unified Lumumbist Party (PALU) July 30, giving him 80 percent. Bemba won nearly 10 percent of the Bandundu vote, Kabila won less than three percent. Gizenga and PALU formed an alliance with Kabila and his Alliance for the Presidential Majority (AMP) for the second round. Bandundu has 2.9 million registered voters, 69 percent of which turned out in the first round.

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¶19. (U) Bas-Congo has also remained peaceful. Bemba won a first-round plurality of votes there with 36 percent. Kabila won nearly 14 percent. Justine Kasa-Vubu and Oscar Kashala, both of whom won approximately 7 percent, have joined Bemba's Union for the Nation alliance. Turnout was slightly higher than the national average with 76 percent.

¶10. (U) Eastern Kasai, a stronghold of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), had the lowest turnout in the country, at 39 percent. Kabila won a plurality with 36 percent. Bemba won just 15 percent, Kashala won 18 percent, and Joseph Olenghankoy, another new Bemba ally, slightly more than nine percent. Several voting stations in Mbuji-Mayi and Mwene Ditu were destroyed the day before the July 30 election, although the situation since has been calm. In Lodja to the north, several clashes have occurred between Bemba and Kabila supporters, and tensions are high in the city.

¶11. (U) Equateur, Bemba's home province, has seen several campaign-related acts of violence. Scattered clashes between Bemba and Kabila partisans took place during October in the provincial capital of Mbandaka. Kabila ally Nzanga Mobutu was trapped in a firefight in Gbadolite October 26 (reftel). Bemba won the majority of Equateur votes with 64 percent, while Nzanga won nearly 31 percent. Kabila won less than two percent. Turnout in Equateur was also relatively high at 74 percent.

¶12. (U) Katanga is one of Kabila's eastern strongholds. He won nearly 78 of the vote there, which had a 72 percent first-round turnout. Sporadic violence has taken place in the capital of Lubumbashi during the past two weeks. Bemba posters have been torn down and his supporters stoned by pro-Kabila crowds. Bemba won less than four percent of the Katanga vote in the last round.

¶13. (U) Maniema has seen few acts of politically-related violence during the campaign; no major problems have been reported. The province overwhelmingly voted for Kabila in the

first round, giving him 90 percent of the vote. Turnout was also high at 85 percent. Bemba received less than one-half of one percent of the province's vote.

¶14. (U) North Kivu, another eastern province, has been generally calm, but many there remain worried about renegade General Laurent Nkunda, whose actions are a constant source of rumor and speculation. Turnout was well above the national average, with 81 percent voting in the first round. Kabila won the province with 78 percent of the vote. Bemba fared poorly in the province, winning less than one percent of the vote, but is now supported by Nkunda.

¶15. (U) Orientale province in the northeast, where turnout was nearly 78 percent, strongly supported Kabila in the first round. He won 70 percent of the vote to Bemba's five percent. Nzanga Mobutu won five percent primarily from districts in the western part of the province bordering Equateur. Ituri District in the eastern part of the province has been generally calm, although several militia groups there have yet to disarm after signing a cease-fire accord in July.

¶16. (U) South Kivu is another Kabila stronghold; he won nearly 95 percent of the votes there. Participation was the highest in the DRC at more than 90 percent. Bemba won less than one percent. The security situation has remained relatively calm, if tense due to the continued presence of the FDLR and undisciplined Congolese army troops. The region did not experience any security problems in the last round of elections.

¶17. (U) Western Kasai has been largely peaceful except for isolated acts of vandalism and political intolerance in Mweka, where several voting centers had been burned during the first-round voting. The UDPS, which has boycotted elections, is popular in the province, which had only a 45 percent turnout on July 30. Bemba won a plurality of Western Kasai votes with 32 percent, new ally Kashala won nearly 18 percent. Kabila won approximately 11 percent of the vote, while Gizenga won 15 percent.

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